

STUDENT GUIDE

The Three Main Shots: The Wide, Mid, and Close Up

The Wide Shot

A *wide shot* provides the views and the story context and defines location. Just showing people where the story is taking place can enhance the story. For example, Jim is a long distance swimmer. That in itself isn't a great story, but saying he swims between Alaska and Russia changes the story dramatically.

The wide shot has a large area that is in focus—from the forefront of the frame to the back of it. Usually, a wide shot uses wide-angle lenses and the depth of field (the area of the image you see in focus) is far and wide.



The Mid

The *mid*, also called the *action shot*, communicates the action of the scene. This shot is usually closer or tighter on the subjects to show what they are doing. In the following shot, you can see the verbs: singing, playing, strumming. This type of shot is needed when the director has to shoot what is happening from the script. Most action movies, naturally, will have this type of shot. Fight sequences use this camera angle.



The Close Up or Detail

This angle is the most difficult to master. It requires a special touch that can be attained with practice. To help communicate the feelings of the young woman singer, you would need to get in closer or tighter and show only her face. If you edit a mid shot of her singing to a shot of her singing soulfully, you would need to capture that emotion by just focusing on her face. The close-up shot or angle communicates emotion. Because the eyes communicate emotion most, they need to be the primary focus of this shot, and the framing needs to be composed around the eyes. When a camera is composed properly, the eye line is located on the upper horizontal line of the rule-of-thirds grid like this:



Here's another example of a close up. See how it focuses on emotion.



The close-up shot is also used to show the detail of something. For example, in the picture below, you see an emphasis on the computer screen. In *Lord of the Rings*, Peter Jackson used many detail close-up shots to focus on the ring. You can watch TV shows to analyze how different types of shots are used.



Depth of Field (Aperture)

In close ups, the depth of field (or the area in focus) is reduced dramatically. This allows the director or the director of photography to control the attention of the audience on the specific subject. With the foreground and background blurred, the audience can concentrate on the emotion and detail for the character. Bringing more information into the scene can confuse the viewer, thus ruining the purpose of the shot. Dramas use close-up shots effectively.

Deep Depth-of-Field: Larger area in focus



in focus

Shallow Depth-of-Field: Smaller area in focus

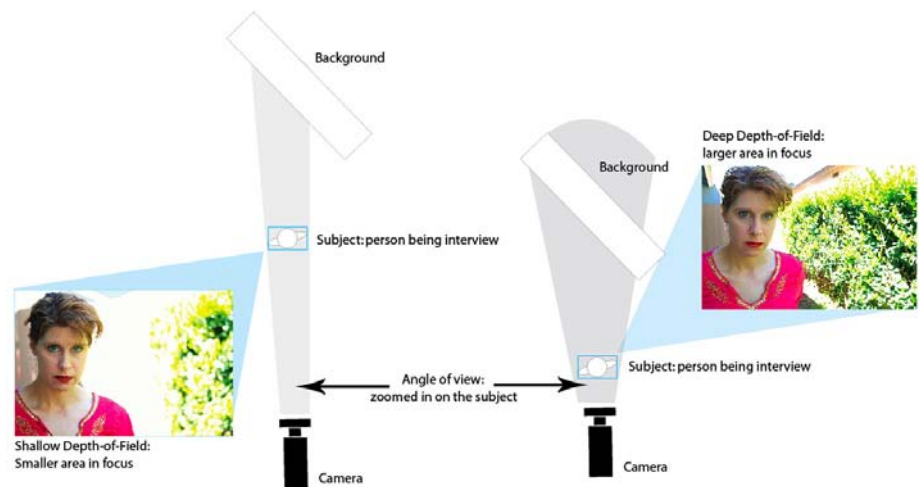


blurred

Higher end cameras have full control of depth of field by having access to the aperture (opening) of the lens. This lesson doesn't address the whole science of aperture, but will look at how you can force a deep (wide) or a shallow depth of field when conducting interviews.

Practice

Place the subject somewhere where he or she is *not* close to a wall behind them. You will need the distance to blur the background. Using a tripod, place the camera far from the person you're interviewing and zoom in on the person's face. Compose your shot to adhere to the rule of thirds. This is a typical position for interviews. If the subject uses his or her hands a lot, you may want to recompose the shot to include the hands. The zooming in and the distance between the camera and the subject will force a narrower (or shallower) area in focus. The opposite of this assignment will give you a wide or deep area in focus.



You can see how you can manipulate the image optically by where you place the subject and the camera.

Shutter Speed

You can easily see the effects of changes in shutter speed with the following exercise.

Practice

To make the action look faster, shoot an action scene with a slower shutter speed. In Final Cut Pro, speed up the sequence slightly. The fast-paced, blurred motion will give the viewer a sense of heightened tension, a stressful feeling. To make good use of slow motion, shoot a scene at the fastest frame rate or shutter speed and then in Final Cut Pro, slow it down. See the difference between the scenes shot at different speeds.